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SUBJECT: AL-JAZEERA TV PROGRAM: "THE UNTOLD WAR STORY" -  
YEMENI-U.S. COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION

**1. SUMMARY:** Al-Jazeera TV broadcast a documentary on Thursday, December 9, 2004, titled "The Untold War Story" addressing the impact and repercussions of U.S.-Yemeni counterterrorism cooperation at the economic, social and political levels. The documentary included impressions from a wide variety of Yemeni officials. Al-Jazeera, although fairly critical of American policy in the Middle East, appeared to be more balanced than usual in its assessment of the U.S. counter-terrorism effort in the region. END SUMMARY

**2. INTRODUCTION:** The program opened with the U.S.S Cole bombing of October 2000, which killed 17 U.S. sailors, as well as the court sentences passed recently against those responsible for the attack. It noted U.S. "pressure" on Yemen to postpone the trial a number of times. Lawyer and human rights activist, Badr Basunaid, spoke of the trial as a "black mark" on Yemen's human rights record that he said the Americans would one day note in their human rights reports. He slammed the Americans for what he called "taking part in faulty court proceedings."

**3. U.S./YEMENI RELATIONS/COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION:** Al-Jazeera touched on U.S.-Yemeni relations which "stagnated" following 9/11, because of "unlimited U.S. demands on Yemen" with regard to the U.S.S Cole; due to Yemen's reservations on the case; and Yemen's stance towards Iraq and Palestine "with which the U.S. was unsatisfied."

**4. RELATIONSHIP TO AL-QAEDA:** The program showed footage of Bin Laden's birthplace in Hadhramout and showed how "Yemenis" constituted a key element within al-Qaeda making it (Yemen) a possible U.S. target after 9/11. "Yemen was labeled after 9/11 as a dangerous country and a source of threat to America's national security" analyst al-Sabri said. An excerpt of a speech made by Shura Council Chairman Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani was played in which Abdul-Ghani pointed out that "President Saleh's visit to Washington on November 24, 2001 was a turning point in U.S.-Yemeni relationships, as the outcome of the visit completely changed the whole situation."

**5. MILITARY COOPERATION:** One part of the documentary highlighted U.S. military support to Yemen in terms of training and equipment. "We feel in Yemen that the number of people trained is not sufficient, as Yemen needs more training to protect all of Yemen, not only the capital and its surroundings," Foreign Minister al-Qirbi said. Al-Jazeera then showed a statement by former U.S. State Department Spokesman-at-Large Phillip Reeker, who met with Yemeni media representatives during a non-official visit to Yemen in November 2003, declaring that "the primary responsibility (to protect Yemen) is Yemen's and the U.S. will offer as much help as it can." Political analyst Al-Sabri criticized the U.S.-Yemeni anti-terror cooperation, which he said, "is a war that protects the interests of others and not Yemen's, even if Yemen claims otherwise."

**6. ECONOMY:** Aden Governor Yehya al-Shu'aibi indicated that Yemen's economic situation is improving and is "slowly" restoring pre-Limburg bombing levels.

**7. DIALOGUE:** Unfavorable views were expressed in the program concerning the government's theological dialogue with extremists and al-Qaeda prisoners. Several commentators also expressed frustration with the practicalities of the dialogue program.

**8. WAR ON TERROR RESULTS:** The program highlighted that Yemen's cooperation with the U.S. war against terror has resulted in:

- The arrest of "dozens" of people including some of the Afghan Arabs.
- Government clamping down on mosques, traders, religious schools and money transactions.
- Confrontations between the government and tribes, between al-Qaeda and the government, and between the government and opposition parties, leading subsequently to a possible "split" in national unity.

- Deteriorating government-tribe relations and resentment about U.S. Embassy contacts with tribes. In this part, Speaker of Parliament Shaikh Al-Ahmar was shown in an old interview criticizing former U.S. Ambassador Edmund Hull's meetings with tribal sheikhs and his visits to certain areas in Yemen which al-Ahmar called, "a breach of norms agreed upon by countries . and which no ambassador has the right to do."

On one hand, a number of the interviewees held the view that the war on terror harmed Yemen's security and generated a situation worse than what had been hoped for. On the other hand, some believed that an indication of the success of the anti-war terror is that it has put al-Qa'eda on the defensive.

9. MULTIPLE VIEWS: It is interesting to note that the program showed both accusations and counter-accusations, such as: the YSP accusing the government of having used terrorists to get rid of its rivals (before and during the 1994 war); the government (Prime Minister Bajamal) accusing the opposition of supporting terror cells responsible for the murder of former YSP senior figure Jarallah Omar and murder of the three U.S. medics in Jiblah; and government-reformed figures accusing former YSP figures - currently holding government positions - of encouraging the government to attack, in the name of the War on Terror, those (Arab Afghans) who had sided with the government forces in its war in 1994 against the YSP's secession plans.

10. CONCLUSION: The program concluded with footage of Yemeni Special Forces maneuvers, with the presenter's voice citing Yemenis' "fears" that the War on Terror (in Yemen) might be endless given the secrecy of U.S. demands from Yemen in this regard.

KRAJESKI